



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

Office of Emergency Medical Services

P.O. Box 2448

Richmond, VA 23218-2448

Robert Stroube, M.D. M.P.H.
State Health Commissioner

Gary R. Brown
Director

P. Scott Winston
Assistant Director

109 Governor St., Suite UB-55
Richmond, Virginia 23219

1-800-523-6019 (VA only)
804-864-7600
FAX: 804-864-7580

January 26, 2007

To: Virginia EMS Agencies
Regional EMS Councils
Operational Medical Directors

From: Michael D. Berg
Manager, Regulation and Compliance

Subject: Medevac Services and Ground Transportation

A recent event involving a Medevac crew and a ground EMS transport unit has created the need for this clarification memorandum. *Virginia Emergency Medical Services Regulations*, 12 VAC 5-31-1040, Operational Medical Director (OMD) Authorization to Practice states in part:

“EMS personnel may only provide emergency medical care while acting under the authority of the operational medical director for the agency for which they are affiliated and within the scope of the EMS agency license.”

In the strictest application of this regulation, if a Medevac service is summoned to a scene and the patient is transported by ground, unless the Medevac agency holds an EMS agency license that covers air and ground transports, the Medevac crew is not authorized to provide care while transporting the patient in a ground EMS unit. This only applies to patients being transported from a scene to the hospital by ground. It does not apply to those patients who are being moved from the medical facility to the helicopter for transportation by the Medevac crew.

However, there are provisions within the *Virginia Emergency Medical Services* regulations that allow for care to be provided by the flight crews of Medevac agencies on ground ambulances in acute or critical situations. Specifically, 12 VAC 5-31-1070, Extraordinary Care Outside of Protocols states in part:

“In the event an immediate life threat to loss of life or limb, medical control may authorize an EMS provider with specific training to provide care not authorized under existing protocol. The circumstances must be documented on the patient care report.”

In addition, should there be a disagreement between the flight crew and ground crew concerning the type and level of medical care necessary for the patient, 12 VAC 5-31-1120, Provider Disagreement over Patient Needs states in part:

“In the event that responding EMS personnel at the scene of a medical emergency have made differing assessments as to a patient’s treatment needs or transport destination, medical control shall be contacted to resolve the conflict.”

The term “medical control” used in these two sections refers to on-line medical control provided by the receiving hospital or centralized medical communications facility.

Medevac programs in Virginia provide an invaluable service to the patients and EMS agencies they serve. Flight crew members have completed advanced training and are authorized to perform procedures, techniques and skills that typically will exceed the scope of practice of on-scene ground EMS providers. Decisions to utilize these personnel on ground EMS units should comply with EMS regulations as well as provide the patient with the highest level of medical care possible.